

Hispanic/Latino Fact Sheet

VERB.™ It's what you do.

VERB.™ Ponte las Pilas.™

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The integrated “VERB. It’s What You Do.” Youth Media Campaign (YMC), launched by the U. S. Department for Health and Human Services (HHS) is a national, multicultural campaign intended to create a movement to promote positive physical and prosocial (organized group) activity and to displace unhealthy, risky behaviors among 9- to 13-year-olds, an age group known in marketing terms as “tweens.” The campaign, which is branded “*VERB. Ponte las Pilas.*” in Spanish (means “get moving”), is being managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The YMC will use mass and interactive media, partnerships, and community events to help tweens increase their levels of positive behavior.

The campaign encourages tweens to find a verb (such as run, paint, sing, dance, jump, skate, etc.) or several verbs that fit their personality and interests. The campaign then encourages tweens to use “their verb” as a launch pad to better health and to make regular physical activity and community involvement a lifetime pursuit.

An important component of the campaign is to inform parents, youth leaders, and educators about the physical and mental health benefits of tween involvement in positive activity. Adult outreach will include suggestions to encourage healthy habits among tweens such as increased physical and prosocial activities.

PHYSICAL AND PROSOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Kids who are engaged in positive goal-directed activities are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. The VERB campaign places an emphasis on moderate to vigorous physical and prosocial activity with clubs/groups, organizations, classes, teams, or family **but not** to the exclusion of individual physical activity or non-physical activities such as volunteering, performing arts, visual arts, and student government, to name a few. Prosocial activity is defined as getting kids involved with their families and/or positive organizations or programs, such as school clubs and community or religious groups.

HISPANIC/LATINO APPROACH

Hispanic/Latino audiences in the United States, unlike the general market, traditionally have much less exposure to information and messages about health, lifestyle, nutrition, and the benefits of organized activities for kids. Because of language and socioeconomic barriers, members of the Hispanic/Latino community may be considered far behind the general market in terms of awareness about benefits of prosocial activity, perceptions of physical activity, and other issues that are integral to this campaign (according to independent market research conducted by GarciaLKS360°, a Hispanic/Latino marketing firm, 2002). Therefore, a bilingual public relations campaign that is fully integrated with general market efforts provides an ideal mechanism for educating the Hispanic/Latino community.

HISPANIC/LATINO STATS AND FACTS

Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior

- Hispanic/Latino youths, grades 5th-8th are less active than Caucasian youths. Self-efficacy, perception of health benefits, parental support, and access to community physical activity programs all factor into the levels of activity (The Bogalusa Heart Study, 1996).
- Children who watch more TV are less likely to engage in vigorous physical activity. Children with a TV in their bedroom watch an additional 4.6 hours per week; more Hispanic/Latino children (50 percent) have a TV in their bedrooms than Caucasian children (20 percent) (Denison, 2002).

Barriers to Physical Activity

- Many new immigrant Hispanic/Latino parents are hesitant to enroll children in organized activities because they don't know the group leaders and are therefore concerned about safety, and they have limited resources to pay for programs and equipment (GarciaLKS 360° focus groups, 2002).
- Familial and gender-based boundaries, as well as language barriers, also pose a great threat to the Hispanic/Latino population's participation in activities (GarciaLKS 360° focus groups, 2002).

Health Perception

- For many Hispanics/Latinos, the concept of health consists of having enough to eat and lack of illness. The connection between physical activity and long-term health benefits doesn't occur naturally (GarciaLKS 360° focus groups, 2002).

Risky Behavior

- Sex, alcohol use, and suicide attempts have risen for Hispanic/Latino teenagers at the same time rates of risky behavior have declined for other ethnic groups (Evidence from Youth Risk Behavior Studies, 2000). Participation in positive activities occupies time that could otherwise be filled with risky behaviors. Additionally, participation in community activities and healthy peer behaviors serve as protective factors against engaging in risky behaviors (Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, and Hill, 1999).

Weight and Obesity

- 30.4 percent of all Hispanic/Latino children in the United States, compared to 25 percent of Caucasian children, are overweight; Hispanic/Latino adolescents born in the U. S. to immigrant parents are more than twice as likely to be overweight as foreign-born adolescents who move to the U. S. (The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 1998). Overall, acculturation or assimilation into a mainstream American lifestyle increases the risk factors for obesity.
- Hispanic/Latino children have a higher incidence rate of Type 2 diabetes than Caucasian children. In some studies, the percentage of children who have Type 2 diabetes rose from less than five percent before 1994 to 20-30 percent after 1994. One of the major risk factors for Type 2 diabetes in children is obesity (Statement on Diabetes, 1999 Congressional Hispanic Caucus Hearing).